

**A Functional Hierarchy of Convention and Visitors Bureaus: The Case Study of Indiana**

**An Honors Thesis (GEOG 498)**

**By**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jemiolo", with a stylized flourish at the end.

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### ***Purpose of thesis***

This research compares three visitors bureaus within the state of Indiana to determine how the size of the area a visitors bureau represents effects the functions and size of the visitors bureau. The three areas that the visitors bureaus represent are, respectively, Muncie, South Bend, and Indianapolis. To illustrate the difference in size among the areas, local information on each location is provided. Each bureau's size, organization, and functions are then explored to determine if geographic size effects the functions of a bureau.

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### *Introduction*

“Tourism is the third largest retail industry in the U.S.”<sup>1</sup> and a major contributor to the nation’s economy. Although thriving, there is a problem of fragmentation in the tourism industry,<sup>2</sup> resulting in a lack of cooperation and communication between the different sectors of the industry. Visitors bureaus can help remedy this situation. A visitors bureau (VB)--called a convention and visitors bureau (CVB) if affiliated with a convention center--is a non-profit organization that represents a geographic area within a state in order to promote awareness of and boost tourism in the area.

A visitors bureau can “bring ... hotels, restaurants, shops, attractions and a host of other businesses together into a single enterprise dedicated to sustaining and improving the travel and tourism industry in its community.”<sup>3</sup> The VB can provide a common link among the many facets of the tourism industry in an area and promote coordination and cooperation among the different sectors. “The CVB acts as a solution to many of the problems facing the tourism-related businesses in a community by informing visitors of the facilities and attractions a community has to offer.”<sup>4</sup>

Depending on its size and focus, a VB may do everything from simply providing information free of charge to travelers to attracting major conventions to an area. Each visitors bureau, though, helps attract visitors and their money, providing jobs and an economic boost to the area it promotes.

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<sup>1</sup> Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association Annual Report 9

<sup>2</sup> Newman 1989

<sup>3</sup> Newman 1989

<sup>4</sup> Fesenmaier 1992

### *Objective*

The objective of my study is to determine if the size of an area effects the size and functions of a visitors bureau. I seek to prove that the size and functions of visitors bureaus vary according to the size of the areas they represent, with the size and functions increasing proportionately with the size of the area. I will accomplish my objective by focusing on a hierarchy of visitors bureaus within a single state.

The factors that will be explored are:

- The tourism potential of each of the areas
- The organization and size of each area's visitors bureau
- The functions of each area's visitors bureau
- The relationship between each area and its visitors bureau

### *Study Area*

I chose to focus on a hierarchy of visitors bureaus within a single state not only because it was logical, but also to avoid variances in funding and tourism potential that might result from crossing state lines. Indiana was chosen due to the accessibility of each of the areas for interviewing and gathering information.

I selected Muncie as an example of a smaller VB, as it is local and not officially connected with a convention center. Indianapolis was a logical choice for the largest CVB, because it is the state capital and largest city in Indiana. I then picked South Bend as a mid-size CVB representative due to its size and location in a different region.

Another factor in my selections was that each city had a couple similar

characteristics, specifically a waterway and at least one university. Although neither of the attributes is a leading theme in my paper, each helps to level the playing field a bit.

### *Methods*

I personally interviewed representatives from the Muncie VB, the South Bend CVB, and the Indianapolis CVA as the main source of information for my thesis.

### *The locations and their tourism potential*

#### *Muncie*

Due to its reputation as an average American city, Muncie is known as “America’s Hometown.”<sup>5</sup> The town of 71,055 residents is located in Delaware County, which has a population of 119,659.<sup>6</sup>

Accessibility is a problem for Muncie. Located 60 miles north of Indianapolis, Muncie lies just east of Interstate 69 on State Road 332; therefore, Muncie has “a hard time getting [travelers] off the highway”<sup>7</sup> to visit. However, Muncie is easily accessible from a few state roads as well as U.S. Highway 35. Muncie does have a small, local airport, but it does not provide commuter services to other cities.

There are just over 1,100 hotel rooms in Delaware County, including “the mom and pop places.”<sup>8</sup> Most of the hotels within the Muncie City limit are located along State Road 332/McGalliard Road, which is the main road through Muncie. Only one of the hotels is located downtown, where the convention center was recently opened.

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<sup>5</sup> *Muncie We're Having a Ball!* Summer 1997, 6

<sup>6</sup> *Polk 1994 Muncie Indiana City Directory*, Introduction.

<sup>7</sup> McKinney 39

<sup>8</sup> McKinney 47

Joann McKinney, Marketing Manager for the Muncie Visitors Bureau, believes that Muncie has “some unique things, particularly for a community [its] size.”

Minnetrista Cultural Center is one of the attractions. Minnetrista “has always got world-class exhibits that change all the time” and ongoing displays of Indiana history and art. Minnetrista’s grounds provide the backdrop for many outdoor concerts, festivals and other events.<sup>9</sup>

Oakhurst Gardens is located on the Minnetrista property. “Oakhurst Gardens is six acres of exquisitely landscaped gardens and winding walkways, showcasing the elegant Victorian home and grounds of George and Francis Ball”.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the gardens, there are exhibits inside the home and the Discovery Cabin, located near the home.

The Horizon Center recently completed its expansion effort. The Center now offers over 47,000 square feet of meeting space, enabling it to “accommodate even the most lavish banquet or extensive trade show.”<sup>11</sup> The Horizon Center is located downtown across from the Radisson Inn, and it conveniently shares a building with Muncie’s Children’s Museum.

The Children’s Museum contains a Garfield exhibit that is “the only exhibit of its kind in the world.”<sup>12</sup> Kids can “discover how Garfield was created...and star in a cartoon with the famed cat.”<sup>13</sup> The museum features many other hands-on exhibits and also holds many workshops and events geared towards children.

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<sup>9</sup> McKinney 41

<sup>10</sup> *Muncie We’re Having a Ball!* Summer 1997, 8

<sup>11</sup> *Muncie We’re Having a Ball!* 1996/1997, 14

<sup>12</sup> McKinney 41

<sup>13</sup> *Muncie We’re Having a Ball!* Summer 1997, 7

Ball State University, with an enrollment of nearly 20,000 students, is located in Muncie. The school itself provides tourist attractions. The concert hall, Emens Auditorium, features “everything from top-name entertainers to theatre and dance companies from all over the world.”<sup>14</sup> University Arena hosts many athletic events as well as concerts and other entertainment. The Ball State Museum of Art “is home to more than 9,500 original works of art spanning nearly 5,000 years.”<sup>15</sup>

The National Model Aviation Museum is located at the Academy of Model Aeronautics national headquarters. Opened in 1994, the museum was designed by Michael Fulmer, who helped design several Steven Spielberg movie sets. “The museum features 100 years of aeromodeling with historic artifacts, vintage magazines and model airplanes,” allowing guests to experience the progression of model aviation.<sup>16</sup>

Other regional attractions include: Prairie Creek Reservoir, where visitors can hike, boat, swim, camp, fish, or just enjoy nature; Indiana Factory Shops, which is an outlet mall “offering over 57 outlet stores in an open-air, village-style setting”<sup>17</sup>; and ME’s Zoo, a petting zoo featuring exotic animals as well as a playground and picnic area.

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<sup>14</sup> *Muncie We’re Having a Ball!* 1996/1997, 23

<sup>15</sup> *Muncie We’re Having a Ball!* 1996/1997, 23

<sup>16</sup> *Muncie We’re Having a Ball!* 1996/1997, 15

<sup>17</sup> *Muncie We’re Having a Ball!* Summer 1997, 17



### *South Bend*

South Bend is also known as “Golden Dome Country”, due to the presence of the famed Notre Dame University. The city itself contains 105,092 residents, but there are 255,400 residents residing in St. Joseph County.<sup>18</sup>

South Bend is fortunate to be located on Interstate 80/90. The interstate is a major thoroughfare for travelers travelling from the East Coast to the West Coast or vice versa, and “over forty million vehicles travel on the interstate”<sup>19</sup> each year. In addition to the interstate, many U.S. and state highways also intersect South Bend. The Michiana Regional Airport provides many flights daily to and from South Bend. Over two million people utilize the airport each year for travel, and it “is the largest feeder to O’Hare airport.”<sup>20</sup> South Bend can also be reached by bus and train. Due to its many transportation links, the city is very accessible to travelers and potential visitors.

There are around 3,300<sup>21</sup> hotel rooms in the South Bend area, many of which are located downtown or near Notre Dame.

According to Marge Filchak, Executive Director of the South Bend/Mishawaka Convention and Visitors Bureau, South Bend is “a community rich in attractions.” There are attractions that can be found only in South Bend, such as the University of Notre Dame.

Thousands of people every year travel to South Bend for Notre Dame sporting events, particularly football games. In addition to the Notre Dame Stadium, Notre Dame offers visitors some unique landmarks. The Basilica of the Sacred Heart, The Grotto of

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<sup>18</sup> South Bend/Mishawaka/St. Joseph County Community Profile

<sup>19</sup> Filchak 61

<sup>20</sup> Filchak 60

<sup>21</sup> Filchak 66

Our Lady of Lourdes, the Golden Dome, the Log Chapel, and the Snite Museum of Art are all located on the Notre Dame campus.<sup>22</sup>

The College Football Hall of Fame is appropriately located in South Bend. Located downtown, the museum uses “interactive exhibitry, audio-visual displays and state-of-the-art entertainment”<sup>23</sup> to bring the game of football to life. Football fans of all ages can test their football skills, experience a victory celebration and much more.

The Studebaker brothers played an important part in developing South Bend industry, and the Studebaker Museum chronicles the Studebaker history. The museum offers a history of the Studebaker as well as American transportation in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. “Displays of Conestoga wagons and presidential carriages up to the last Studebaker to come off the line in 1964”<sup>24</sup> can be found at the museum.

The Northern Indiana Center for History tells “the stories of the people who shaped the region.” The center’s attractions are: the 1930s Worker’s Museum, located in a “restored 1870s cottage”; the History Center; a Children’s Museum; and Copshaholm, a 38-room mansion complete with historic gardens.<sup>25</sup>

The Century Center is South Bend’s major convention center “with over 64,000 square feet of exhibit space.”<sup>26</sup> Located downtown on the waterfront, the center hosts many conventions, entertainers, and other events.

Other South Bend attractions include: the East Race Waterway, an artificial whitewater course where visitors can ride the rapids on a raft; Potawatomi Park Zoo, the oldest zoo in Indiana and “home to over 250 animals, birds and reptiles”; and Shiojiri

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<sup>22</sup> South Bend/Mishawaka Visitors Guide 3

<sup>23</sup> South Bend/Mishawaka Visitors Guide 6

<sup>24</sup> South Bend/Mishawaka Visitors Guide 4

<sup>25</sup> South Bend/Mishawaka Visitors Guide 4

Niwa Japanese Gardens, “designed by the same landscape architect who designed Epcot Center.”<sup>27</sup>

### *Indianapolis*

Indianapolis is the state capital and one of the nation’s fastest growing cities. Indianapolis is the 12<sup>th</sup> largest city in the U.S with 818,014 residents in the city and 1,461,684 residents in the metropolitan area.<sup>28</sup>

Indianapolis is a day’s drive from anywhere in the Midwest, making it a convenient place to visit for many people. The city is easily accessible by all major forms of transportation. Interstates 65, 69, 70, and 74 as well as numerous U.S. and state highways all run through Indianapolis. In fact, Indianapolis is “called the ‘Crossroads of America’ because it is intersected by more segments of interstate highway than any other metropolitan area in the U.S.”<sup>29</sup> The Indianapolis International Airport, located minutes from downtown, offers hundreds of flights daily to many major destinations. Bus lines and Amtrak also service Indianapolis.

There are over 16,000 hotel rooms in the metro area, and over 3,600 of those rooms are located downtown.<sup>30</sup>

Indianapolis offers visitors a wide variety of attractions. One of the most famous attractions is Market Square arena, home of the Pacers. The arena is also home court to the Indianapolis Ice hockey team and the Indiana Twisters soccer team. The 18,000 seat

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<sup>26</sup> South Bend/Mishawaka Visitors Guide 10

<sup>27</sup> South Bend/Mishawaka Visitors Guide 12

<sup>28</sup> This is Indianapolis 10

<sup>29</sup> This is Indianapolis 9

<sup>30</sup> This is Indianapolis 13

facility hosts many prestigious athletic events as well as concerts, meetings and other events.<sup>31</sup>

The Indiana Convention Center and RCA Dome is as renowned as the arena. Visitors can take a behind-the-scenes tour of the home of the Indianapolis Colts. When the field is empty of players, the 60,500 seat Dome plays host to numerous trade shows, concerts and special events. The Center's 1.6 million square feet of space encompasses numerous ballrooms, exhibit halls and meeting rooms.<sup>32</sup>

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway attracts hundreds of thousands of racing fans every year. The track hosts "the greatest spectacle in racing," the Indianapolis 500, each year as well as the Brickyard 400. Race fans can learn the history of the Indy 500 and view many of the winning cars at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame Museum.<sup>33</sup>

Indianapolis is not just for sports enthusiasts. The city possesses many fine museums, such as the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art. Within walking distance of downtown, the museum is "home to one of the nation's finest collections of American Western and Native American art and artifacts."<sup>34</sup> The Children's Museum is the largest children's museum in the world. Kids of all ages can enjoy the "10 major galleries, 356,000 square feet of hands-on activities and a big, round, five-story film theater."<sup>35</sup>

The Indianapolis Zoo is one of the many Indianapolis attractions that the whole family can enjoy. The 64-acre zoo features the largest aquarium in Indiana and daily

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<sup>31</sup> Indiana Travel Guide 72

<sup>32</sup> Indianapolis Convention Planners Guide 22

<sup>33</sup> This is Indianapolis 70

<sup>34</sup> This is Indianapolis 67

dolphin shows. Visitors can view the African Plains and even experience an elephant ride.<sup>36</sup>

To catch a glimpse of what American prairie life was like in the 1800s, visitors can tour Conner Prairie. Conner Prairie is a “living history museum where costumed residents of a recreated 1836 village go about their daily work, discuss ‘current’ topics and gossip with visitors.”<sup>37</sup> Guests can tour the historic Conner home and participate in historic games and activities.

Shopping is definitely an important Indianapolis attraction. Although there are multiple shopping venues, the newest and largest shopping extravaganza is the Circle Centre mall, located in downtown Indianapolis. The \$319 million shopping and entertainment complex contains fine department stores and over 100 specialty shops.<sup>38</sup> In addition to shopping, guests can visit the Centre’s many restaurants, nightclubs, entertainment galleries and the multi-screen cinema.

### *Organization of the Visitors Bureaus*

#### *Muncie*

The Muncie Visitors Bureau (MVB) was founded in 1984, before the Horizon Convention Center was erected. A nine-member board runs the MVB, “five of whom are appointed by the mayor, two by county council, and two by the county commissioners.”<sup>39</sup> The bureau employs five full-time staff members: the executive director, marketing manager, sales manager, tourism coordinator, and an office manager. Also employed is a

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<sup>35</sup> Indiana Travel Guide 66

<sup>36</sup> Indiana Travel Guide 66

<sup>37</sup> This is Indianapolis 67

<sup>38</sup> Indianapolis Convention and Planners Guide 10

part-time receptionist and, usually, there is one non-paid intern per semester. Volunteers are rarely utilized by the bureau as it's "difficult...to figure out what they can do...and [the bureau doesn't] have physical space"<sup>40</sup> for volunteers.

The bureau's budget is \$460,000 a year, but the MVB has never made that much. The MVB is funded by the hotel/motel tax, which is a countywide tax on any hotel room. In Delaware County, the tax is 5%, of which the bureau is the sole recipient. How much the bureau's budget is each year is contingent upon how much is taken in through the tax each year. The nearest the MVB came to reaching the budget was 1995, when the VB received about \$420,000.<sup>41</sup>

The budget is allocated in certain lines, but the bureau does not track how much was spent in each line. Instead, the MVB moves money around as needed for each project. The MVB invests a lot of money in sports marketing and sports subsidies. In fact, much of the sports-related funding goes to the Sports and Hobby Development Group (SHODOG). The SHODOG is a partner group of the MVB, and the executive director of the MVB acts as the volunteer CEO of the SHODOG.<sup>42</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the MVB opened before the Horizon Convention Center, and thus operates independently of the Horizon Center. The relationship between the MVB and the Horizon Center "hasn't been too good in the past, but it's starting to change." Each organization realizes that, if they corroborate, they can extend each of

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<sup>39</sup> McKinney 53

<sup>40</sup> McKinney 36

<sup>41</sup> McKinney 36

<sup>42</sup> McKinney 35

their limited resources. Per Joann McKinney, the two organizations need to work together because “that’s where the opportunities lie.”<sup>43</sup>

### *South Bend*

Formed in 1972, as part of the Chamber of Commerce, the South Bend/Mishawaka Convention and Visitors Bureau is now “the largest division of the Chamber of Commerce.” Many of the visitors bureaus in the country are either not formed as a part of or have since separated from the Chamber of Commerce. In South Bend, though, the main CVB is located in the Chamber of Commerce offices, and “the board of the Chamber of Commerce is the governing and legal body that’s responsible for the CVB.”<sup>44</sup>

The executive director for the CVB is also the vice president of the Chamber of Commerce. There are six other full-time positions: the assistant director, a convention person, a motor coach person, a convention servicing person, a public relations person, and a full-time secretary. In addition to the full-time staff, the CVB employs another part-time motor coach person and one or two interns per semester. The CVB also shares some staff with the Chamber of Commerce, such as the receptionist and the mailroom clerks.<sup>45</sup>

The CVB utilizes a large volunteer corps. In addition to the main CVB office, there is a Visitors Center located at the Michiana Regional Airport. The Visitors Center

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<sup>43</sup> McKinney 51

<sup>44</sup> Filchak 55

<sup>45</sup> Filchak 57

is totally connected to and funded by the CVB, but is mainly run by volunteers.

Volunteers also assist the CVB with mailings, events, and tours.<sup>46</sup>

The CVB is funded mainly by the hotel/motel tax, which is 6% in St. Joseph County. The bureau is the recipient of 20% of the hotel/motel tax, and the rest of the tax goes to the convention center and other areas. The Chamber of Commerce must then match roughly one-third of the tax money to further contribute to the CVB's funds. The bureau's budget for 1997 is \$585,698; \$420,128 is from the hotel/motel tax, \$138,000 is from the Chamber of Commerce, and \$27,570 comes from other sources. The budget is outlined each year, and the CVB strictly adheres to the outline. Funds are allocated to certain lines, and the lines are tracked every month to see where the money is going. The CVB "is a business, and [they] run it just like any business."<sup>47</sup>

The CVB is very integrated with the convention center. In fact, the CVB has helped pull in and schedule conventions "since the convention center was built over 20 years ago," making the convention market the oldest market of the CVB.<sup>48</sup>

### *Indianapolis*

This year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ICVA, which was formed in 1923. The ICVA employs forty people, including the President and CEO, Bill McGowan. There are three vice presidents, and each is in charge of one of the three main divisions of the ICVA. The three main divisions are Finance and Administration, Membership and

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<sup>46</sup> Filchak 57

<sup>47</sup> Filchak 59

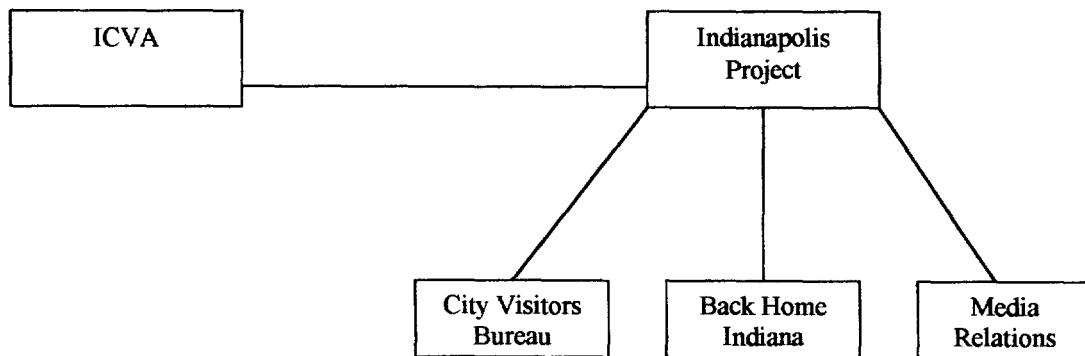
<sup>48</sup> Filchak 61



Development, and Sales and Marketing. The rest of the employees are divided among the three areas.<sup>49</sup>

The 1997 ICVA budget was \$6.4 million, most of which comes from a contract with the Capital Improvement Board (CIB). The CIB is an organization in the city that “build[s] areas, manage[s] arenas, buildings, facilities, and parks.” They are the recipients of 5% of the hotel/motel tax and 1% restaurant tax, and they are contracted to give a portion of those taxes to the ICVA. Membership dues, advertising, and other miscellaneous sources comprise the rest of the budget.<sup>50</sup>

The ICVA itself does not utilize many volunteers, but its sister organization, the Indianapolis Project, does. The Indianapolis Project has three main areas: the City Visitors Bureau, Back Home Indiana, and Media Relations. These areas will be discussed more in the next section.



The ICVA is housed within the Indiana Convention Center and RCA Dome, but is a totally separate organization. The organizations are “linked by [a] contractual

<sup>49</sup> Hughes 72-73

<sup>50</sup> Hughes 74

connection,”<sup>51</sup> helping to ensure that each organization’s policies are in line with the other’s policies. The convention center cannot book any events outside eighteen months without consulting with the ICVA. The convention center actually books events; and the ICVA acts as “the gatekeeper,”<sup>52</sup> controlling which events are booked and when. This system helps avoid any scheduling conflicts and ensures that major conventions and events will be given priority over smaller, less profitable ones.

### *Functions of the Visitors Bureaus*

#### *Muncie*

The services provided by the MVB “run...the gamut.”<sup>53</sup> The MVB is a visitors center, but that is “not the focus of what [they] do.”<sup>54</sup> The MVB provides local information to both visitors and residents when they call or stop by. The MVB also puts out yearly and seasonal brochures that focus on the events and attractions in Muncie and the surrounding areas. A side project of the MVB is running a street banner program and marquee to advertise upcoming events in the community.

The MVB provides a “Friday Fax” to the local hotels and attractions. The fax is sent every Friday and contains the events for the upcoming weekend. When guests arrive, the establishments can now “talk more intelligently about what’s going on in town.”<sup>55</sup>

If approached, the MVB will help local organizations prepare bids for tournaments and events. The MVB will work out a marketing strategy, gain support of

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<sup>51</sup> Hughes 77

<sup>52</sup> Hughes 78

<sup>53</sup> McKinney 37

<sup>54</sup> McKinney 38

local officials, and sometimes even present the bid package for an organization. The MVB also helps service an event once it gets to Muncie, such as providing a central reservation system for the hotels. The attendees and delegates can call the bureau, and the bureau can then “plug them into the hotels.”<sup>56</sup>

The MVB spends a lot of time and effort helping pull in sporting events, particularly softball and bowling tournaments, as “they have actually been more profitable than conventions or meetings.”<sup>57</sup> For this reason, the MVB currently funds the Sports and Hobby Development Group. In addition to running the Summer Heat Hot Air Balloon Festival each year, the SHODOG also helps to secure and service many sporting events.

The target travelers for the MVB are “meeting planners...and people who organize sporting events.”<sup>58</sup> Meeting planners just recently became targets due the expansion of the convention center. Meetings and events are very simple to track, as it is easy to find out when and why they are coming. The bureau can easily determine how many people are attending and for how long. The bureau does not focus on leisure travelers because they are very hard to track. Also, Muncie is “really not a destination yet,”<sup>59</sup> so the bureau does not feel it is worthwhile to track the individuals who visit mainly for sightseeing purposes.

In order to create a larger leisure market, the MVB markets Muncie as a region, including sites from Anderson and even Fort Wayne. “Research that the state has done...shows that most people don’t take one and two-week vacations anymore. People

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<sup>55</sup> McKinney 54

<sup>56</sup> McKinney 38

<sup>57</sup> McKinney 37

<sup>58</sup> McKinney 41

normally just have time for an extended weekend.”<sup>60</sup> The MVB is capitalizing on the research by portraying the region as an ideal place to spend a couple days. The bureau really targets families when marketing the region because “there are a lot of people with children right now.”<sup>61</sup>

For the meeting and event market, the MVB focuses on Muncie’s small town hospitality and price. Of course, price is more of a factor when competing with larger towns, like Indianapolis, for an event. Hospitality is a major factor no matter what city Muncie is competing against.

The MVB knows that, no matter how exotic or well-known a destination, a visitor will not have a good impression of that place if he is not treated like a valued customer. For that reason, the MVB tries to “sell an experience.”<sup>62</sup> When bidding on and planning for an event, the bureau “get[s] really into the heart and the psyche of the people and find[s] out what it is that floats their boat.”<sup>63</sup> Then, the MVB tailors each event to ensure that the visiting group leaves happy.

The MVB “ha[s] to do a lot of awareness... about what kinds of attractions [Muncie has]”<sup>64</sup> to offer in order to attract visitors and events. Representatives from the MVB will travel to various trade shows and set up a booth promoting Muncie and the surrounding area. The bureau has done some familiarization tours (FAM tour) for group travel planners and the media to show them what the Muncie region has to offer. A

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<sup>59</sup> McKinney 41

<sup>60</sup> McKinney 43

<sup>61</sup> McKinney 43

<sup>62</sup> McKinney 46

<sup>63</sup> McKinney 45

<sup>64</sup> McKinney 40

typical FAM tour might consist of around fifteen to twenty guests, who are then taken on a three-day trip “from Fort Wayne to Anderson.”<sup>65</sup>

The MVB is more reactive than proactive. “Fortunately, [the bureau hasn’t] had to be too proactive.”<sup>66</sup> In the past, the bureau relied on repeat business and word of mouth to bring events in. However, the expansion of the convention center prodded the bureau into a more proactive mode. “There’s a new market now that [the bureau] did not have the accommodations for before.”<sup>67</sup> As a result, the MVB is contacting meeting planners and organizations to qualify their needs and search for possible bids.

When bidding on sporting events, Muncie usually competes with cities of comparable size. Kokomo, Bloomington, Richmond and South Bend are often competitors for tournaments. For other types of events, though, Muncie sometimes competes with much larger and more popular places. For instance, when the MVB won a bid for the American Volksmarch Association’s national meeting in 1999, it was competing against well-known places like Salt Lake City, Utah and Albuquerque, New Mexico.<sup>68</sup>

Many of the tournaments are spread out over several weekends, providing repeat business for weeks. Some of the larger sporting events are for only one weekend, but 1,000 people may come in for that weekend. The bureau also organizes small events like class or military reunions. The size of an event helps “decide how much effort and resources [the MVB] puts into it.”<sup>69</sup> The bureau would rather try for a medium-sized group that stays several nights than for a large group that stays only one night. The most

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<sup>65</sup> McKinney 40

<sup>66</sup> McKinney 50

<sup>67</sup> McKinney 50

<sup>68</sup> McKinney 44

ideal events are the ones that last a week, providing needed weekday business for Muncie hotels.

### *South Bend*

The bureau's "main focus is economic development...to stimulate the local economy through the expansion of the visitor industry."<sup>70</sup> The CVB accomplishes this mission by dividing its services into four main segments: the Visitors Center, convention market, motor coach market, and leisure market. The CVB then "has a marketing plan and a strategy to deal with each one of those markets."<sup>71</sup>

The CVB is located on the third floor of an office building near downtown; therefore, it is not easily accessible to many visitors. For this reason, the CVB created the Visitors Center, which is located at the Michiana Regional Airport. The Visitors Center provides daily, face-to-face contact with travelers and enables them to readily obtain information on the community. The Visitors Center is the "front stage" for the CVB, while the main office is "the backstage."<sup>72</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the convention market is the CVB's oldest and most established market. Softball tournaments and other sporting events are included in this segment. The bureau employs one full-time convention salesperson whose purpose is to garner new business. The other full-time convention person spends half of her time working with state associations to pull in the larger conferences. The other half of her time is spent making all of the necessary arrangements for an incoming group, such as

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<sup>69</sup>McKinney 48

<sup>70</sup>Filchak 58

<sup>71</sup>Filchak 59

<sup>72</sup>Filchak 58

securing guest speakers and organizing group tours.

Scheduling meetings for the convention center is becoming increasingly difficult, because the convention center is nearly booked. "It's very difficult to find things that fit into the limited space that [the convention center has]"<sup>73</sup> available. However, Marge Filchak considers the CVB "very lucky" to have such a problem on their hands.

The CVB is "fairly new to the... motor coach market."<sup>74</sup> The CVB hired one main person to focus on the motor coach market. Interstate 80/90 provides the CVB with many motor coach possibilities. The bureau can try to pull in motor coaches from every direction, even if it's just to grab a meal.

In order to obtain a larger piece of the motor coach pie, the CVB attends the major motor coach trade shows and does two familiarization trips per year. One FAM trip encompasses the whole region and the other focuses only on South Bend. The CVB "want[s] to put a good, strong effort into [the motor coach market] for about five years, then step back and analyze the market and see if ... there is a good enough ROI (Return of Investment) to" continue pursuing the motor coach industry.<sup>75</sup>

Another new market for the CVB is the leisure market, which is less labor intensive than the convention and motor coach segments. The airport Visitors Center helps reach many of the leisure travelers. The CVB also distributes its visitors guide heavily to visitors and possible visitors. For instance, the CVB distributes visitors guides during freshman orientation at the various universities.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Filchak 63

<sup>74</sup> Filchak 63

<sup>75</sup> Filchak 64

<sup>76</sup> Filchak 65

To actually pull travelers to the region, though, the CVB relies heavily on advertisements. An advertisement in a newspaper or magazine or on the radio will bring people to the community within a few months. An ad has the power to reach millions of people, making it a very cost-effective marketing strategy.

The CVB's target travelers, like many destinations in the Midwest, are in the forty to sixty-five age group. Many of the region's attractions simply appeal to an older market, and the CVB capitalizes on that appeal. The CVB advertises in magazines, like *"Midwest Living, Home and Away and Better Homes and Gardens,"* to make sure that it reaches its target audience.<sup>77</sup>

South Bend's "major image is really the University of Notre Dame."<sup>78</sup> The city is fortunate that, due to the university, it does not have to struggle to attract visitors. In fact, Notre Dame is responsible for attracting the majority of South Bend's visitors. Thanks to the university, South Bend "is pretty well known around the country."<sup>79</sup>

There are other factors, however, that the CVB uses to promote the city. It helps that South Bend is "a family community." South Bend is also the regional hub, which means that the city offers a large variety of services and amenities. The community is home to "a prestigious convention center" as well as "the second largest shopping concentration in the state." The university creates an awareness of South Bend, but there are other factors that make it an attractive place to schedule a meeting or event.<sup>80</sup>

Public relations are very important to the bureau. The CVB relies on a budget that is small when compared to what it must accomplish with the budget. Therefore, the

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<sup>77</sup> Filchak 64-65

<sup>78</sup> Filchak 60

<sup>79</sup> Filchak 62

<sup>80</sup> Filchak 60



CVB hired a full-time staff person that concentrates on getting free advertising for the bureau, whether it's an actual ad in a magazine or article in a newspaper. In 1996, the CVB obtained \$600,000 in free advertising.<sup>81</sup>

The CVB is “definitely more proactive”<sup>82</sup> than reactive about getting events into the community. Although South Bend is well known, so are many of the other towns that South Bend competes against for events. The city cannot depend on reputation alone to pull in a major convention.

South Bend might compete against places like Muncie or Kokomo for sporting events and for “groups that don't necessarily need convention facilities but need other types of facilities.” Otherwise, South Bend usually competes with larger cities like Indianapolis, Toledo, Ft. Wayne, and Milwaukee. Nationally, South Bend might compete with a city like Tulsa, Oklahoma.<sup>83</sup>

The CVB prefers to pursue events that last two to three days and are “a combination of meetings and trade shows.” That way, much of the convention center would be utilized. Also, it's important that the event “use at least two hotels--citywide is better--and generate between 250 and a couple thousand room nights.”<sup>84</sup>

### *Indianapolis*

The mission of the Indianapolis Convention and Visitors Association is “to stimulate the economic and...the quality of life impact to the city of

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<sup>81</sup> Filchak 69

<sup>82</sup> Filchak 63

<sup>83</sup> Filchak 61

<sup>84</sup> Filchak 66

Indianapolis...through the solicitation and booking of major conventions.”<sup>85</sup> The ICVA is “the city’s active solicitation arms in securing major conventions,”<sup>86</sup> which is no small feat. The ICVA’s three main divisions--Finance and Administration, Membership and Development, Sales and Marketing--each performs important functions to help the ICVA fulfill its mission. However, the Finance and Administration division will not be discussed, as it deals mainly with budget and human resources issues.

The Sales and Marketing division is in charge of “stimulating interest through advertising and...converting the inquiries into customers,” and then servicing a convention once it is secured. The division does everything from coordinating the bid to coordinating the event, such as reserving accommodations and providing registration. Due to the scope of activities and the number of conventions, Sales & Marketing is the largest division of the ICVA.<sup>87</sup>

Memberships are an important asset to the ICVA, providing a way for the association to gain both support and money. The ICVA currently has about 750 members; and Membership and Development is “constantly out trying to find ways to garner up new members and support.”<sup>88</sup> The ICVA offers members and clients “VIP (Visibility, Information, and Promotion).”<sup>89</sup> The ICVA ensures that the clients know who the association’s members are and that the members have information on the clients. The members can then plan effectively to attract and accommodate the clients.

In order to promote local attractions and earn additional revenue, Membership and Development produces a guide that is brimming with paid advertisements. The ICVA

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<sup>85</sup> Hughes 71

<sup>86</sup> Hughes 75

<sup>87</sup> Hughes 72

<sup>88</sup> Hughes 72

also puts together its core publication; a *This is Indianapolis* magazine devoted to advertisements for and descriptions of the city's multitude of attractions. "Enhancement of the image for the city through...advertising is a service that [the ICVA] offer[s] the city."<sup>90</sup>

The ICVA does provide some visitor information, but it is not a visitors center. The City Visitors Center is actually a part of the ICVA's sister organization, the Indianapolis Project. Located across the street from the ICVA, the City Visitors Center offers visitors hundreds of free brochures and other free information.

The other two divisions that are part of the Indianapolis Project are Media Relations and Back Home Indiana. The Media Relations arm "has five people who are dedicated to spinning stories and dealing with the media on positive stories beyond tourism,"<sup>91</sup> creating free public relations for the region. Back Home Indiana "is a for-profit subsidiary that sells all Indiana products, and the profits go back to stimulate [the Indianapolis Project]."<sup>92</sup> The Project's main objective is to promote the city, which helps the ICVA in its mission.

For leisure, the city's target travelers are "people within twenty-five to forty-five age groups," preferably "couples and families."<sup>93</sup> The ICVA does not target specific groups, but rather focuses on the dimensions of a group. Although the ICVA does not target specific groups, it does focus heavily on associations. Associations are typically large groups that utilize over 2,000 rooms on peak night, which is the night of highest

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<sup>89</sup> Hughes 75

<sup>90</sup> Hughes 75

<sup>91</sup> Hughes 84

<sup>92</sup> Hughes 86

<sup>93</sup> Hughes 77

occupancy. Associations are also easy to track because “they’re highly visible [and] they aren’t very fragmented.”<sup>94</sup>

Rick Hughes compares scheduling groups to “building a building.” First the ICVA books huge groups that have over 2,000 rooms on peak night, which is the night of highest occupancy. The ICVA books the huge groups five to six years in advance. “Then, as the time frame narrows, . . . the propensity . . . to book those groups also diminishes.” A couple years out, then, the ICVA would begin layering medium-size groups on top of the larger groups. The top layer consists of small meetings and group tours.<sup>95</sup>

“All of [the ICVA’s] major competitors have some major addition, expansion or new facility,” so buildings are not a strong selling point. Therefore, Indianapolis tries to “position [itself] around some of the softer things, like people.” The ICVA knows that friendly, competent people will make a visitor feel welcome and relaxed. The ICVA wants the customer to feel that Indianapolis “take[s the customer’s] visit and business personally.”<sup>96</sup>

Convenience is another selling point for Indianapolis. The city offers “a very compact package.” The convention center, hotels, shopping centers, and many other attractions are located just blocks away from each other downtown.

Indianapolis also capitalizes on its location when promoting the city. The city can be reached within a day’s drive from anywhere in the Midwest, making it a convenient location to hold a convention.

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<sup>94</sup> Hughes 79

<sup>95</sup> Hughes 79-80

<sup>96</sup> Hughes 76

The ICVA considers itself “proactive and responsive.”<sup>97</sup> The association does not sit back and wait for events to fall in its lap. The ICVA has a strategy, and it actively pursues ideal organizations and events.

The ICVA conducts about twenty-seven FAM trips per year, ranging in size from fifteen to seventy people. In addition to the FAM trips, the association does about 130 site inspections a year. Whereas a FAM trip is a group of potential clients visiting for a broad overview of an area, a site inspection is “one person that...[has] a very specific interest” in an area.<sup>98</sup>

The city competes primarily with larger cities for events. “Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, Columbus,... Cincinnati, Cleveland, [and] Louisville” are the main competitive cities; although Indianapolis sometimes competes against cities like San Antonio, Baltimore or Dallas. Large organizations often rotate the geographic locations of their meetings to cover its entire membership; therefore, Indianapolis is often competing with cities within the Midwest.<sup>99</sup>

### *The Visitors Bureaus and Their Communities*

#### *Muncie*

The MVB is not closely integrated with the community. The bureau was formed fourteen years ago, and “most [community members] don’t have a clue [the bureau]

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<sup>97</sup> Hughes 78

<sup>98</sup> Hughes 85

<sup>99</sup> Hughes 80

exists.”<sup>100</sup> Many of the people who know of the MVB’s existence have misconceptions about its functions and funding.

One of the misconceptions, for instance, is that the bureau is supported by local property taxes. If locals knew that the MVB creates rather than takes money from the community, they might be supportive of the bureau. Joann McKinney estimates that the economic impact of the MVB on the community is “in the millions of dollars.” The tourism industry also helps the community by providing an estimated 1,000 jobs.<sup>101</sup>

Joann McKinney believes that the root of the communication problem between the MVB and the community is the natives’ negative image of Muncie. “They’re still mentally back in that era twenty years ago,”<sup>102</sup> when Muncie was very industrialized and before today’s large service sector existed. Due to their own negative image of Muncie, it’s hard for locals to grasp why anyone would consider Muncie a destination.

To help change the locals’ negative image of Muncie, the MVB is forming a tourism council called “Promote Delaware County”. The aim of the council is to educate the community on the positive things it has to offer visitors. The council realizes that it may be too late to change this generation’s outlook, so the “best hope is to change their children’s attitudes.”<sup>103</sup>

Communication among the MVB, Horizon Center and hotels is not good. The convention center and the MVB are “working more in conjunction...to extend both of [their] limited resources,” but many hotels are not willing to cooperate. “The hotels are very guarded with their information,” creating scheduling problems for the MVB and

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<sup>100</sup> McKinney 48

<sup>101</sup> McKinney 53

<sup>102</sup> McKinney 49

<sup>103</sup> McKinney 49

Horizon Center. It is difficult to schedule events without knowing the number of hotel rooms available. The MVB, though, is working with the hotels to try to establish better lines of communication.<sup>104</sup>

### *South Bend*

The last studies in 1993 showed that “visitors spent \$239 million”<sup>105</sup> in the county. The CVB makes sure that the community is aware of the positive impact the tourism industry has on the community, especially since the tourism industry employs over 5,500 people in St. Joseph County.

According to Marge Filchak, the CVB is “very integrated” with the community. “[The CVB has] worked hard over the years to make sure that the area leaders in the community, the community itself, elected officials, and business people all understand the mission of the Convention Bureau and support it.” The bureau creates and presents programs stressing the impact of tourism on the community and the need to work together to continue the success.<sup>106</sup>

One of the CVB’s programs is the “Millions to Billions” program, which targets “the value of the hospitality industries in St. Joseph County.”<sup>107</sup> The CVB will present the program to elected officials, major boards, and hotel managers in the county. In addition to testimonials, the presentation highlights the economic impact of the hospitality industry in the community and the vast employment opportunities within the industry.

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<sup>104</sup> McKinney 51-52

<sup>105</sup> Filchak 66

<sup>106</sup> Filchak 67

<sup>107</sup> Filchak 67

Marge Filchak meets regularly with the mayor and is “on a first-name basis with every elected official that [she] possibly can be.”<sup>108</sup> She also travels periodically to Washington D.C. to meet with the state’s representatives and update them on regional issues.

To ensure that supporters and local officials are kept current on the CVB activities, the bureau sends a quarterly review called “Stocking the Pond.” The mailing “update[s] them on the important things [the CVB is] doing”<sup>109</sup> and important issues in the industry. In short, the CVB works constantly to maintain a high level of community integration.

### *Indianapolis*

The ICVA helped generate an impressive \$1.6 billion tourism dollars last year, a number that clearly indicates the positive impact the ICVA has on Indianapolis. Of that \$1.6 billion, “\$137 million in state taxes...and \$75 million in local taxes” were generated. The tourism industry is thriving in Indianapolis and supplies the region with 49,000 jobs.<sup>110</sup>

The ICVA realizes that “there’s just no way that [it] can be successful working independently.”<sup>111</sup> Collaboration among the many facets of the tourism industry is essential to ensure continued success in Indianapolis. It helps that many tourism-related businesses are also members of the ICVA, because they know that they can only help themselves by supporting the ICVA and each other.

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<sup>108</sup> Filchak 68

<sup>109</sup> Filchak 68

<sup>110</sup> Hughes 83

<sup>111</sup> Hughes 81



The ICVA provides reports to its members to keep them updated on the association's activities. The members are like "little ambassadors out there for tourism"<sup>112</sup>; therefore, the ICVA wants to make sure the members are knowledgeable and happy about the job the ICVA is doing.

The association does not need to "go out and sell the city management on"<sup>113</sup> its purpose. The CIB (Capital Improvement Board) is the main source of income for the ICVA. The mayor appoints many CIB members; therefore, the city knows what an important asset the ICVA is to Indianapolis. Both the mayor and the city are very supportive of the ICVA.

### *Conclusion*

The first section of my research clearly defines differences in the size of the areas. Differences in organization and funding among the bureaus are highlighted in the second section, showing that the size and budget of the bureaus vary according to the size of the represented area. The discussion of each bureau's functions clearly illustrates that they increase relative to the size of the represented area. From my research, I have determined that the size of the area a visitors bureau represents does impact the size and functions of the bureau. More specifically, the size and functions of visitors bureaus increase proportionately with the size of an areas.

The impact of each bureau on its community, though, transcends size. Each bureau positively influences its area's economy by attracting millions, even billions, of

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<sup>112</sup> Hughes 83

<sup>113</sup> Hughes 83

dollars. The main objective of each bureau is to attract visitors. Whether a large convention or a single family, visitors bring revenue to a community.

Each bureau also helps integrate at least some of the many facets of the tourism industry. The bureaus all recognize the need for the different sectors of the industry to work together. Although differing in their success, the bureaus each share a common goal of promoting cooperation within the tourism industry.

*Summary Table*

	Muncie	South Bend	Indianapolis
City size	71,055	105,092	818,014
County size	119,659	255,400	1,461,684
# of hotel rooms	over 1,100	3,300	16,000
Budget	\$460,000	\$585,698	\$6,400,000
# of full-time staff	5	7	40
# of part-time staff	1	1	0
Volunteers	No	Yes	Yes
Target traveler	Families	40-65 age group	25-45 age group
Target events	Sporting events	Meetings & trade shows	Associations

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## APPENDIX A

### Muncie Visitors Bureau

#### Interview with Joann McKinney

D.N. Okay, I guess I'll start off with a few basic questions. First of all, do you have a web site?

J.M. We are in the process of developing one. No, we're not there yet. It's one of my projects. It will be up in the next couple of months. We're real close. We've got a company working on it right now.

D.N. And now your staff--how many do you have?

J.M. We have five full-time staff members. We have the executive director. Myself, I'm like the marketing manager. We have a sales manager, tourism coordinator, and an office manager. Then, we have a partner group called the Sports and Hobby Development Group of Muncie, and we have one employee of that. Our executive director also serves as the volunteer CEO of that organization. Then, we have a part-time receptionist. I usually have one intern, at least, per semester and sometimes during the summer.

D.N. What about volunteers?

J.M. Other than the interns, no, we haven't used a lot of volunteer help. It's been real difficult for us to figure out what they can do. We're not open on the weekends and some visitors bureaus are, and they will have the volunteers staff at the center on the weekends. We don't really have a visitors' sector, per se, and we don't

really have the physical space for it. That's the other thing; we're bursting at the seams in this office as it is.

D.N. What about...I know the triathlon had a bunch of volunteers there. Did you help?

J.M. We worked with them, but we didn't coordinate it, no. A lot of people thought we were more involved in it than we were. We helped them do the bid when they originally bid to get that international world championship here. We rented office space to them. That's their office in the corner. Actually, we ended up waiving the rent and we gave them a lot of financial assistance, but we charged the state. A lot of us served as volunteers on committees, just like almost everybody in Muncie did, but we weren't directly involved in coordinating it.

D.N. Budget. Are you allowed to talk about it?

J.M. Yeah, sure. It's public record. Our budget is about \$460,000, but that is totally contingent upon what the hotels...In case you don't realize, we're totally funded by a hotel/motel tax. Some visitors bureaus are funded by a combination of the Innkeeper's Tax in the state of Indiana, and that's a countywide tax on any hotel room. So it's just like a sales tax. If you stay at a Delaware County hotel, you pay 5% sales tax and you pay another 5% hotel/motel tax, and we are the recipients of that. Now, in some counties it's like 2% or 3%, and sometimes they have to subdivide that amount among other groups. But a lot of other bureaus also have memberships, like a Chamber of Commerce would have, and we don't. Some even have a city organization, like part of the city government budget would go to the VB. We're not funded that way. So for us, we plan for a \$460,000, but we have never made that much. Last year, I think, actually '95 was

our biggest year, and it was about \$420,000. I think that was the highest we've gotten.

D.N. How is that allocated? How much goes towards sales, how much towards promotion?

J.M. It's real hard to say. I don't have a set amount. It's budgeted in certain lines, but we don't track it. So what happens is, we just spend out of the 300 series. Everything—group tours, convention sales—all of that is under there. So we just move money around when we need it for whatever project.

D.N. Okay, it's called the 300 series?

J.M. Well, it's just the way the government here... We are a county office, and that's just the way... Like the 100 series deals with salaries, personnel and whatever. I think it's the 300 series. Although we plan for things, we spend a lot of money on sports marketing and sports subsidies. We give money to the Sports and Hobby Development Group, and they help us bring in softball tournaments and bowling tournaments. They have actually been more profitable than conventions and meetings.

D.N. What is the actual name for the Sports...?

J.M. It's Sports and Hobby Development Group of Muncie. I always put SHODOG. That's what we call it for short.

D.N. What services do you offer?

J.M. It runs the gamut. What we will do locally, like if there's a group that wants to hold a convention. For example, a lot of the bowling people will come to us. They want to bid on this tournament, so we help them bid on it. We'll prepare the

bid. We'll go with them, if they want us to, to wherever the meeting is; and we'll do a presentation, usually accompanied by a written bid. For example, this last fall we bid on the Farm Progress Show. They were a group of farmers that approached us about six years ago that wanted to host... It's like the World's Fair of agriculture is what it is. We bid on it a couple years ago, and we didn't get it. We bid again last year, and we still didn't get it. But it comes to Indiana every three years, so we might do it again. I don't know if the farmers are going to or not. They came to us, and we put a committee together of local people, and we went out to Iowa, where this year's show was. We traveled to Iowa to see the lay of the land, figure out how the show works and what we would need to put it on here. And we go with the county commissioners to get their commitments to upgrade the roads out in that area. We talked to them with the sanitary district and got them to agree to haul the waste for free. We found sponsors to help underwrite the cost of their vendor banquet. And we put that part of the bid together. Something we also do is, we service that business once it gets here. We provide, if they want it, central housing, which is a central reservation system for the hotels. They can call one number--the attendees and delegates can call one number--then we can plug them into the hotels.

D.N. If just a family would come to visit, would you make reservations for them?

J.M. We don't make reservations for them, no, but we will give them information on the hotel. We are also a visitor's center. That's not the focus of what we do, but we are a visitor's center. If people come in from out of town, or even local, for information from us... We get a lot of phone calls for Muncie information. You



know, people will rent hotels or whatever, and they want something to do. So we're an information center. Sports and Hobby Group will also help run events, too. For example, we are putting on the AAU Girls' Basketball to coordinate a tournament for them. It's coming to town in April, and we are the ones who secured the gyms. I say we, but I mean Sports and Hobby, secured the gyms, and we will be paying the officials and be making all of their arrangements.

D.N. So, are you jointly funded with the Sports and Hobby?

J.M. No. We fund them pretty much right now. They're not self-sustaining yet; that's what we are trying to get them to. Sports and Hobby puts on the Summer Heat Hot Air Balloon Festival every year. So we're hoping that someday that will be profitable enough that it will bring money in to the SHODOG account.

D.N. Now when you bid, do you have to use your \$460,000 budget for travel expenses and everything?

J.M. Yes, absolutely. We also go to trade shows, and that's another way of garnering business. Our group tour person who handles the motor coach market, she goes to a lot of travel trade shows where there are ... There's one called GLAMER, which is the Group Leaders of America. Those are the people who organize tours. Or whoever it might be: church groups, bank groups, whatever. She also met with a bank travel planners group a few months ago and went to one of their trade shows. Basically, we try to get the motor coaches to come into Muncie and, for our purposes, to spend the night. A lot of times, there's a big group traveling between Ontario, Canada and Branson, Missouri. They travel by I-69, but we have a hard time getting them off the highway to come visit us. We have to do a

lot of awareness with them about what kinds of attractions we have. We do a lot. We are not Disneyland, and we know that. So people aren't going to come here and spend a week's vacation in Muncie, Indiana. So, knowing that that's the reality of the place, we are not going to try to sell something that we don't have. But we are becoming, along with Anderson and some of the other regional attractions, more of a destination. We're still not a destination in and of ourselves, but by packaging regionally, we've been able to do a lot more. And we've done some familiarization tours--FAM tours--with both group travel planners and with media, and we kind of showed them what we have here. We also do something strange, too. We run a street banner program here. I don't know if you've seen the banners on the bridges and stuff. Right now, I think they've got the Red Cross. We administer that program, for whatever reason. I don't know how we ended up with that assignment. We also do a marquee on Madison Street.

D.N. So when you do the FAM tours, who comes in that you do these tours for?

J.M. People who plan travel for other people. The group travel planners and those kind of people.

D.N. So she goes to those GLAMER trade shows and gets people to come from there for a FAM tour?

J.M. And then we have more organized ones, too, where we've hired motor coaches and had maybe fifteen or twenty leaders and we plan something from Fort Wayne to Anderson. Basically, it's like a three-day trip that we take them on. We're doing one in April for the media, the travel writers. I have no idea how many of

them have signed up yet. So we try to do...I haven't been as good about it here, but, as a state, we try to do a lot of media relations and try to reach travel writers. Indiana gets real overlooked. It's not that we have a bad image, it's that we don't have an image at all. We are competing with big money around us, too. We have the smallest budget in the Midwest. In fact, our state's budget ranks 42nd in the nation. It's terrible. Kentucky spends twice what we spend. Who really has the budge--it's probably the largest budget in the United States--is Illinois. It's all mostly out of Chicago. They spend big bucks on tourism promotion.

D.N. So your target traveler is more what age group?

J.M. For us, our target traveler is really meeting planners. We've got this brand new convention center. We are really going after that and people who organize sporting events. We're a little different than some of your other visitors bureaus. When you talk to South Bend, you'll probably hear them talk about a much larger focus on leisure travelers. For us, it's so hard to track. You never know when they come to town, but you can track when a meeting comes to town. You know how many people are staying overnight; you know why they are there. It's really easy to track. But the individuals who just come to do sightseeing...Like I said, we're really not a destination yet. We have some nice attractions. Minnetrista Cultural Center has always got world-class exhibits that change all the time, so that when you visit, you don't see the same thing every time you go there. And the local Children's Museum and their new facility--I mean, that's a world-class facility. It's the only Garfield exhibit of its kind in the world. So we've got some unique things, particularly for a community this size. They're extremely nice.

D.N. What are the other main attractions, in your view, that will pull people into Muncie?

J.M. One that has worked in two ways for us... We worked real, real hard with the Academy of Model Aeronautics. We convinced them to move from western Virginia. We were originally trying to get the opportunity to host their national and international championships. And over a six-year period we got to know them and find out what their names were; and we found out that they were planning, hoping, to move their international headquarters from Virginia to someplace else. So we went in and bid on it, convinced them that Muncie, Indiana was the place to be, worked out an incentive package with local government and Chamber of Commerce officials, and we were able to bring them here. So they started, basically, another company here. So it works on a lot of different levels. We've got economic development. For us, they built a museum. I mean, not for us, but for the purposes of tourism. Now we have this beautiful museum out there that was designed by a guy who used to work for Steven Spielberg. So we've got a real nice museum, and its going to be even bigger as this place grows. That's a tourist attraction in and of itself. Plus, then they perpetually bring in their members for tournaments. So it's paid off in a lot of different ways. They employ fifty people; I would say forty of them are local hires. They brought in new people who bought houses and pay taxes here. They've got a 1,000 acre site out there that they are paying property taxes on. They've got tournaments that bring in new money into the community every time they hold a tournament. They now hold their national championships here every

year, and they go all through the month of July. So that perpetually brings in business every year. I mean, that's bread and butter for us. Now we have replacement business if, God forbid, we lose softball and can't make it back up. We've got the month of July pretty well covered. We're in negotiations right now with the "Y". They want our Sports and Hobby Group to run the complex through the summer, just for the tournaments. They're not going to run the local meets out there, but they will do the tournaments out there. We are negotiating the details right now, like what it's going to cost to replace the lights, and do the upkeep on the fields, and the funding, and the building and all of that kind of stuff. And then we are working with a group of local business people to get some ground donated and build a new complex on the southeast side of town.

D.N. So what key promotion...What works best for you in Muncie is basically marketing as a region?

J.M. For the leisure traveler, yes, I think so. We've also tried, as a region, to really focus on the family. Research that the state has done, and even nationally, shows that most people don't take one and two-week vacations anymore. People normally just have time for an extended weekend. There are a lot of people with children right now. So, demographics and psychographics even, that's our market for leisure travel. That's why having our Children's Museum is such a bonus.

D.N. So, when you compete for an event, do you ever compete with Indy or South Bend?

J.M. Yes, on the bowling bids. I was part of one a couple years ago for the Young American Bowling Alliance. Basically, we set up trade show tables at their